

Winners Selected in VFW's Annual National Youth Scholarship Contest

Panama City, Fla., student awarded a \$30,000 scholarship

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Last night, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and its Auxiliary proudly announced the national winners of its annual Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen youth scholarship competitions, live during the 2016 VFW Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C.



Enacted in 1946, the 2016 Voice of Democracy program's theme asked students to describe "My Vision for America." The first-place winner, Grayson Campbell, sponsored by VFW Post 10555 and its Auxiliary in Panama City Beach, Fla., received an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., where he was presented with the T.C. Selman Memorial Scholarship

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Award in the amount of \$30,000. The second-place winner, John Dykstra, sponsored by VFW Post 1774 and its Auxiliary in La Mesa, Calif., received the \$16,000 Charles Kuralt Memorial Scholarship Award. The third-place winner, Christopher Oulds, sponsored by VFW Post 8798 and its Auxiliary in Eufaula, Okla., received the \$10,000 VFW Scholarship Award. All other state winners received at least a \$1,000 college scholarship. More than 36,000 students participated in this year's competition.

[Read Grayson Campbell's award-winning essay.](#)

Watch Grayson deliver his essay on-demand at vfw.org/VFWDC2016.

[See the complete list of 2016 winners.](#)

Enacted in 1995, the Patriot's Pen program is designed to foster patriotism by allowing students the opportunity to express their opinions on a patriotic theme, this year's being, "What Freedom Means to Me." The first-place winner, Shane Stafford, sponsored by VFW Post 10468 in Searchlight, Nev., received an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., where he received a \$5,000 award.

The second-place winner, Cassandra Soeldner, sponsored by VFW Post 10810 in Stuttgart, Germany (VFW Department of Europe), will receive a \$4,000 award. The third-place winner, Nicole Kashner, sponsored by VFW Post 108 and its Auxiliary in Chillicothe, Ohio, will receive a \$3,500 award. More than 130,000 students participated in this year's competition.

Watch Shane Stafford deliver his essay on-demand at vfw.org/VFWDC2016.

[Read Shane's award-winning essay](#)

[See the complete list of 2016 winners.](#)

Photo Caption: (Left) VFW National Commander John A. Biedrzycki Jr. and VFW Auxiliary President Francisca Guilford present Grayson Campbell with his \$30,000 award; (right) VFW National Commander John A. Biedrzycki Jr. and VFW Auxiliary President Francisca Guilford present Shane Stafford with his \$5,000 award.